



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Rivers, Trails, and
Conservation
Assistance Program

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PRESIDENT BUSH HIGHLIGHTS RIVERS & TRAILS PROGRAM IN THE "HEALTHIER U.S. INITIATIVE"

(June 21, 2002) President George W. Bush announced the "Healthier U.S. Initiative" to alert Americans to the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in physical activity, nutrition, and behavior. The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program was highlighted in the Presidential initiative for its efforts to promote physical activity through the development of local trails, greenways, and parks.

According to the Surgeon General, more than 60% of adults do not achieve the recommended amount of physical activity. To counter this problem, President Bush has challenged adults to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day and children to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Trails, greenways, and local parks are a natural prescription for this problem. Being active in the outdoors has benefits for the mind and body and can help individuals, and whole communities, become healthier.

Through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (also known as Rivers & Trails), the National Park Service is able to promote outdoor recreation and improve public health. The Rivers & Trails program works with community groups and local and State governments to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The Rivers & Trails program helps local communities provide inviting environments close to home to encourage regular exercise and group interaction. Walking trails, bicycle paths, greenways, and revitalized waterways provide an abundance of opportunities for healthy and fun activities that can improve health and save lives.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

In 1999, the NPS Rivers & Trails program signed an innovative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agreement promotes the development, use, and benefits of local parks and recreational infrastructure to support physical activity. Since that time, the Rivers & Trails program has worked with a variety of health and physical activity partners, from the State of Indiana to the Paso del Norte Health Foundation in Texas, to provide close to home opportunities for recreation and physical activity. In 2002, the Rivers & Trails program has over 20 local projects involving the health and physical activity community as partners.

In addition to the agreement between the National Park Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed by the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Health & Human Services, and the Army Corps of Engineers to promote physical activity on public lands. This agreement was announced and signed as part of the President's "Healthier U.S. Initiative." The cooperating agencies will collaborate to raise public awareness of the role and benefits of physical activity and of the many places in America's public lands where recreation opportunities exist.

For more information on the Rivers & Trails program, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/rtca or call 202-565-1185.

For more information on the President Bush's "Healthier U.S. Initiative," visit the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/fitness.

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